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ABSTRACT

Because it was believed that poorer students had to work more hours out of school and that this might tend to discriminate against them academically, this study was conducted to ascertain whether a negative relationship existed between the students' GPA and the number of hours they work. The statistical analysis was conducted with an N of 119 who were enrolled as full-time students in the fall of 1973. Forty-seven percent of the students worked 21-40 hours a week; 12 percent did not work at all. The statistical analysis showed that the students who worked 31-40 hours (comprising 11 percent of the sample population) had the highest GPA's. Those who worked over 40 hours and those who did not work at all had the lowest GPA's. On the basis of this investigation there is no clearcut correlation between students' GPA's and the number of hours worked. Other variables not accounted for in this hypothesis are involved. Arbitrary rules about course loads and working hours were therefore determined to be unnecessary. (MJK)

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# The Effects of Students' Outside Employment on Their Grade Point Averages.

Michael V. Ostrowski

Introduction: The nature and scope of this paper includes the objective investigation of the relationship between the number of hours that a student was gainfully employed apart from his school, and his grade point average. The writer, as well as several other colleagues, has felt that the student employment is a significant problem for Harper as well as many other community colleges across the nation. It was the impression that students from the lower socioeconomic class had to work more hours out of school in order to support themselves and that this was one societal factor that tended to discriminate against these students to the advantage of the students of the middle or upper socioeconomic classes who did not have to work but were financed by their parents. It was assumed that the lack of adequate finances was a discriminating factor that tended to maintain the status quo among the social classes by keeping the middle and upper classes in school to perpetuate their standings and tended to keep lower class individuals out of school and from social mobility to a higher socioeconomic class or position.

Empirical evidence tended to indicate that many students who were failing courses were found to be employed from 20 to 40 or more hours per week and attempting to carry a full or close to full time schedule (12-15 hours).[1] A Guidance Department sample

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[1] 1973 Harper College Guidance Department Survey of the Working Student, (Palatine, Illinois, 1973).

of some 502 students indicated that approximately 71% of the students worked either part or full time. It may have been true that the instructors were confronted only with the failing-working student and never saw or had an opportunity to become aware of the passing-working students. This is exactly what the writer wished to find out as there was always an occasional story of the "A" or "B" student who worked 40 or more hours per week.

The hypothesis of this paper will be that the writer expects to find a negative relationship between the students' grade point average and the number of hours that they are employed out of school. It will be assumed that as the number of hours of gainful employment increases, the students' grade point average will decline, showing a negative relationship. If this is proven, the writer would want to start an educational program with the Guidance Department in order to discourage outside work with students who have low grade point averages so as to salvage these students from failure and dropping out of the institution. At this point it appears to be a fairly widely shared belief among many faculty members that many students do badly because they are over-committed to their outside employment.

The communication with the Guidance Department would be an attempt to have counselors limit a student's load according to the number of hours that he was employed outside of school. A typical formula that could be considered would be a declining schedule, so that 15-18 semester hours could be reserved for the non-employed students down to 3 - 6 hours for the students who were employed 40 or more hours a semester.

Background and Significance: The literature appears to support and suggest the hypothesis that students' over-commitment to work will have a negative relationship with their grade point average and university counselors have advised against this. In the book, Beyond the Open Door, author K. Pat Cross states that students of low ability were advised against working part time and advised to carry light course loads.[2] In one study reported by Cross[3] administrators of remedial services reported that one of the major obstacles to learning for low achieving students was the necessity of a job which drained off time and energy from the study of academic subjects. Another study reported in Education, U.S.A.[4] indicated that high school seniors who planned to attend college and who did not make especially good grades planned on spending more time on jobs during the school year than those students who were performing better in the academic areas.

The one societal factor that works against the students from the lower socioeconomic classes is that students from the working class families have greater financial need and thus plan to work,[5] being employed for longer hours during the school year than those students from professional families. According to this study, many students of low academic ability may work as a matter of preference- in order to find the personal satisfaction apart from school through academic accomplishments.

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[2] K Pat Cross, Beyond the Open Door (San Francisco, 1972)p. 26.

[3] Ibid., (American Association of Junior Colleges Directory, 1969) p.27.

[4] Brown University, Education, U.S.A. (Providence., R.I. April 1970)

[5] Cross, p. 47

A report of the New York State Education Department in 1969[6] indicated that lack of money does operate as a barrier to educational opportunities and that working for many students is an absolute necessity (40% of the women and 33% of the men reported that they needed a job). It appeared from several studies that the women needed the jobs and financial support more than the men.

According to the SCOPE study[7] 23% of the males and 18% of the females indicated that at least half of the expenses had to come from outside work employment.

As A.B. Hollingshead mentioned in Elmtown's Youth[8] a major need in the developmental pattern of all adolescents is money, and if one does not receive it from his parents, then he is forced to work for it between school hours.

Hollingshead found that students from the lower socio-economic classes tended to work outside of school more than those from the middle and upper classes. The lower class students were more likely to drop out of school before they completed high school. The lower class thus had the fewest number of students attending college.[9] In this study, he shows that the better grades went,

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[6] New York State Education Department, A Longitudinal Study of the Barriers Affecting the Pursuit of Higher Education by New York State High School Seniors. (Albany, New York, 1969).

[7] D. Tillery, D. Donovan and B. Sherman, SCOPE: Four-State Profile, Grade 12, (University of California, 1966).

[8] A.B. Hollingshead, Elmtown's Youth (New York, 1949), p. 157-8

[9] Ibid., p. 174

usually, to the students from the Class I and II homes (Out of V) and these same children had the fewest dropouts and the fewest children working long hours after school and on weekends.[10]

Hollingshead stated that the parents of the Class V students place so much pressure on the child to work that he is almost forced to leave school: this is a major factor for low grades and dropping out of school at a very early age.[11]

Procedures: The writer originally attempted to obtain a random sample of the freshman and sophomore students from the day and evening classes at William Rainey Harper Community College in Palatine, Illinois, students who were in attendance for the Fall 1973 and Spring 1974 academic year. Of the original 500 questionnaires that were distributed, some 380 were returned (approximately 76%). From this 380, only 119 could be used for statistical treatment as a large number of students were not enrolled in the fall, but were enrolled in the spring, or were not enrolled in the spring with a full course load of 12 or more credit hours. The writer conducted the statistical analysis with and N of 119 students who were enrolled as full time students in the fall of 1973. The specific statistics that the writer used was the "one way analysis of variance for fixed effects."

The 119 students were first divided into six treatment groups according to the number of hours that each subject worked. Each subject was then asked for his grade point average for the fall 1973 semester to be recorded in one of seven categories. Of this

[10] Ibid., p. 172.

[11] Ibid., p. 270.

particular sample, we had 36% of the students who worked 21-30 hours, 25% in the 11-20 hour group, 12% not working, 11% working 31-40 hours, 9% working 1-10 hours and 7% working over 40 hours.

From the statistical analysis we can see that the students who worked between 31-40 hours had the highest grade point average. The over 40 hours group had the lowest, followed closely behind by those students who did not work at all.

Results: The results of the "one way analysis of variance for fixed effects" tends to indicate that there is no significance between the grade point average of the six treatment groups. The writer wanted to show a significance at the alpha .01 level. This was discarded, however, as the data was not anywhere significant at the alpha .05 level. Tha HO or null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference among or between the group means cannot be rejected. Apparently the variance between the treatment groups is due to other independent variables which have not been controlled for under the present hypothesis.

Recommendations: From this investigation, it appears obvious that there is no clear cut correlation between students' grade point averages and number of hours that they are employed outside of school for economic gain. There appears to be an entire host of independent variables that are operating on the dependent variable of the students' grade point average. As K. Pat Cross points out in her research, many students find working out of

school beneficial and necessary; it does give them some measure of success and accomplishment that will act as a positive motivational force and spur students on in their academic work. She feels that this is especially true for the low academic achieving student who has a long past history of failure or negative school experiences.

Hollingshead points out that the socio-economic status of the students' parents is a significant variable as he shows that, in general, students from the upper classes who work tend to obtain a high grade point average. In general, the students from the lower socio-economic class homes tend to have low grade point averages, fail, or drop out of school altogether. This is further complicated by the native intelligence of the students which tends to indicate that, generally, the students with the higher I.Q. scores tend to obtain higher grade point averages, working or not, over their lower I.Q. controls. Motivation is an extremely important variable that enables many students to work long hours on occupational tasks and still successfully carry a full time academic load with no detrimental effects.

The academic counselors have the extremely complicated task and responsibility of advising students . Before making recommendations pertaining to work loads and course loads, a counselor should, in depth, examine all of the previously mentioned variables about the students' past and present life style and status. The writer sees that to make arbitrary rules about course loads and number of hours working does not make too much sense. These rules should be very flexible, open and based on individual cases after

intensive consultation with the student.

Another possible way to approach this problem would be to interview those students who are failing more than one course, to pick out those students who have a 1.5 or lower grade point average and see how many of those were working to see exactly what type of student cannot carry a full load and work simultaneously. Knowing that working out of school is not the single independent variable that produces failure or low grade point average, then we must look for a specific combination or cluster of variables that appear to be associated with a low grade point average. It appears to the writer now, that possibly we were looking for the all too obvious variable to blame the low grade point average upon, rather than looking for a specific set of variables. Possibly as a follow-up study, one could attempt to tease out any one or set of variables that a given group of students could be found to possess and this could be the basis for future predictions of academic failure or low grade point average.

From this study, the writer feels that we cannot flatly state that students who carry full loads should not work out of school, as the data here does not support this type of statement.

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